

# *Master Plan*

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Village of Oxford, Michigan

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Village of Oxford,  
Oakland County, Michigan,

MASTER PLAN

April, 2005

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY**

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## INTRODUCTION

In September of 2002, the Village of Oxford Planning Commission initiated an update of the Village's Master Plan to guide decisions affecting future development and redevelopment in the community. The updated Master Plan, contained in this document, is the result of data collection, field surveys, many meetings and discussions by the Village Planning Commission, Village Administration, Oxford Community Development Authority and citizen input at Planning Commission meetings. This plan also expands upon the fundamental purpose of the Village's prior Master Plan which was adopted by the Village Planning Commission in August of 1989 and updated September of 1997. The amendment's intent was to plan for and to provide future land use designations for: the Village-owned Washington/Pearl Street alley; multiple-family designations in the village, and; recreational use of former railroad right-of-way and related properties. In addition to these goals, this updated plan responds in a comprehensive manner to current and future development concerns of the Village and to additional issues that have arisen since 1989.

The Village of Oxford is an established community that has continued to grow and develop over the past decade, leaving limited areas for new growth. The community needs to update its planning and implementation strategies to provide guidance for redevelopment and infill development and to provide for preservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of the built and natural environments. This plan was prepared to establish the overall goals, objectives, policies, and strategies to guide the decisions related to redevelopment and infill development in the Village. The plan looks forward with a vision for the next 20 years.

Environmental, social, political and economic conditions that affect the natural and built environment are continuously changing. Therefore, the planning process, which seeks to anticipate the impacts of those changes, must be continuous. The master plan should undergo periodic review and revision to remain a useful guide for community change and to effectively respond to important issues. A comprehensive review and revision must be conducted every five years and the plan should be continuously assessed in light of on-going development and redevelopment.

## HISTORY

The Village of Oxford has a long and varied history dating back to April 1837 when the local citizenry petitioned the Michigan legislature to be recognized as a separate municipal organization. The community initially became part of Oakland Township. The Village followed as an incorporated municipality in 1876, at which time, it encompassed one square mile.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This history of the Village of Oxford was adapted from the Oakland County Book of History, the Sesquicentennial Publication: 1820-1970, undated.



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The beginnings of the Village started with the first application for land. In 1823 Elbridge G. Deming came to this unsettled area with his wife. He originally came from Sharon, Vermont where he was born in 1800. His wife, Sally Baker Phillips, was originally from New York. After their marriage in 1832 they left New York and headed west toward Michigan. They arrived in Pontiac first, but continued on to Oxford, establishing their home in 1832.

Mr. and Mrs. Deming were the first to acquire and settle on land. Their arrival marked the first family in Oxford. Others soon followed. John Rossman, Fite Rossman, John Williams, John Shippey and Samuel Axford all applied for land a year later in 1833. The settlers found many natural lakes, the largest being 100 acre Stoney Lake

Deming and Avery Brown, a bachelor who had arrived in 1831, made shingles to supply the incoming settlers who were making their way toward the area. When supplies were needed it usually meant a trip to Pontiac. At times the merchants in Pontiac could not satisfy their needs, and journeys to Detroit were necessary to obtain supplies. Traveling to Detroit was difficult. The elevation of Oxford is 1,550 feet above sea level, and about 500 feet higher than the City of Detroit.

As the community grew a name for the area became important. Many tales exist today of the origin of the Village's name. One tale has it that the name is an adjustment of Axford, which some people objected to. Another tale is that early settlers had oxen. The third story suggests that many of the early settlers may have originated from Oxfordshire, England.

The Village began to thrive with the arrival of rail service. In 1837, the Detroit Railroad connected with the Bay City Railroad. Many industries started around this timeframe, creating and shipping many products, such as carriages, phaetons, plows, harrows, scrappers and other types of farm machinery. Approximately 35 companies were in operation at this time. The first newspaper was established in 1869. The largest industry in Oxford today is the gravel mining operation. Gravel mining commenced around the Village area in 1911. By 1924, five of the largest gravel pits in Michigan were located just outside of Oxford. Most of their products are still used today for the construction of roads and bridges.

By the turn of the century the Village was bustling with commerce and traffic. However in 1896, a tornado struck the area, one of the worst calamities to ever occur in Oakland County. The number of casualties is not known exactly, but, at least 43 persons died in the storm. The path of the winds followed the main streets and cut a swath a half mile wide. Among the structures leveled was the Methodist church. Only the floor and pews remained when the winds subsided. The tornado was one of several seen that day around Michigan, but this one was by far the most damaging.